

# REFERENCE LETTERS

## STUDENTS

Reference letters are needed for future employers, or for admissions to graduate programs. There are several ways to begin collecting reference letters. One way is for students to begin collecting letters from faculty and to create a self-managed file. If the letters are collected in this way they may not always be considered confidential letters by graduate programs. Another option would be for students to use an online reference letter service such as Interfolio. Interfolio allows you to create an electronic portfolio so you can manage your important credentials online. Your portfolio can include letters of recommendation, curriculum vitae, writing samples, dissertation abstracts, teaching certifications, student evaluations, and more. Once you sign up and upload your documents, the application process becomes as simple as telling Interfolio where you want to apply and when. For more information visit [www.interfolio.com](http://www.interfolio.com).

It is important to note that the University of Oregon does not have a reference letter writing committee. Students will obtain reference letters from individual faculty to support their application to a graduate program. Here are a few tips for obtaining reference letters from faculty:

- Ask them in person. Approach the writer early in the term or well ahead of when the letter is needed.
- Ask the professor to write you a reference letter directly after your experience with them.
- Make sure the person you ask is able to write a letter of recommendation commenting on your personal characteristics, strengths and weaknesses (see handout to faculty, physicians, employers for details). They must have knowledge of you beyond a grade in the class.
- Allow ample time (at least two weeks) for your reference to write the letter.
- Give them a copy of your transcript. Highlight the classes you took from them, the term in which you took the class, and the grades from the course.
- Let the professor know what your goals are and also make them aware of your minor and major.
- Give them some information on any college activities that you have been involved in. (Attach resume).
- If there is not a specific form you have for the recommender to complete let them know what kinds of information you would like them to include in your letter.
- Write thank-you notes to your references to let them know that you appreciate their time and effort.



UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

# REFERENCE LETTERS

## TO FACULTY, PHYSICIANS, EMPLOYERS

The letters of recommendation from faculty members and others are critically important to admission committees. The following topics may assist writers in providing the most comprehensive recommendation.

1. **Basis of authority to evaluate the applicant:** How well do you know the applicant and under what circumstances did you have contact with him/her? Classroom/research or project/volunteer/work site? If it was a class, describe it. Did the class include just undergraduates, or a mix of undergraduates and graduate students? If it's a non-classroom experience, describe the nature of your relationship with the applicant and the tasks/activities he/she completed.
2. **Student strengths:** If it's a class, what was the student's relative position in the class? What academic/personal strengths does the applicant possess (eg intellectually quick, hardworking, thorough, persistent, dependable, strong problem solver, independent learner, eager participant in discussions, creative, etc.) If it is not a class, describe the personal characteristics you observed in the applicant's work.
3. **Student weaknesses:** Have you observed any particular weaknesses or characteristics that you feel would interfere with a successful health professional career?
4. **Team work:** How well does the applicant get along with the faculty and his/her peers? Is the applicant a leader, a follower? If it is through an employment or volunteer site. Did the applicant cooperate with staff? Did the applicant learn from coworkers?
5. **Emotional preparation:** Does the applicant seem emotionally mature? How does the applicant handle disappointment or stressful situations?
6. **Communication skills:** How do you assess the applicant's oral and written communication skills?
7. **General Recommendation:** Do you have any information that would lead you to strongly support or not support a career in the health professions for this applicant?

### Additional Topics:

- Did the student show remarkable recovery after a slow start?
- Did any personal crisis influence the student's performance level?
- Has the student discussed his/her interest in health professions?
- Has the student done a lot of service and volunteering in their community?
- How much exposure has the student had to their desired profession?



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The following is a list of the number and type of reference letters that are requested by Oregon schools for different health professions:

References Required for Oregon Schools			
	OHSU	Pacific Univ.	Oregon State
<b>Medical</b>	Min. of 3 references; should be from college or univ. faculty, ANY dept. w/ at least one from science		
<b>Dental</b>	3 ref. from science faculty, one from a dental professional	2 letters; one being from a dental professional	
<b>Nursing</b>	No letter required for OCNE program		
<b>Occupational Therapy</b>		2 letters; one from Occup. Therapist, one from college faculty member, pre-prof. committee, or supervisor/employer	
<b>Optometry</b>		2 letters; one from optometrist, one from professor	
<b>Physical Therapy</b>		2 letters; one from PT, one from college faculty member, pre-prof. committee, or supervisor/employer	
<b>Pharmacy</b>		2 letters; one from pharmacist, one from professor	Min. of 2 letters, Max. 3 letters; one from science instructor, one from pharmacist or healthcare provider
<b>Physician Assistant</b>	3 letters; one from MD/PA, two from supervisor in PA-related program/academic source	2 letters; one from MD/DO, PA, NP, or CNM	
<b>Veterinary Medicine</b>			3 letters; one being from a veterinarian, others from academic sources/ supervisor in Vet.-related program
<b>*Letters from family, friends, politicians, and TA's are not accepted</b>			
<b>*Others schools may have different requirements, so be sure to check for specific schools</b>			



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